

Dear Honorable Senator Catherine Osten,

My name is K. Michelle Garbart and I am from South Windsor. I currently teach at the Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet school in Glastonbury. My son is a recent graduate of GEHMS and my daughter is a first grader at GEHMS. I am writing to ask you to please support the continued funding for our magnet schools.

First, let me thank you for your past support for funding for magnet schools in Connecticut. My children have benefited and continue to benefit greatly through the extraordinary opportunities they have experienced at GEHMS. This diverse and engaging learning environment has given them opportunities to learn and appreciate many cultures, explore science through hands on labs, as well as explore the world of their future through the use of advanced technology. Additionally, I know that my children learn better and are more prepared for the real world as a result of working alongside other students from different backgrounds.

I have admired the mission of magnet schools since I first researched the idea as an undergraduate education student at UConn. I was attracted to the idea of schools bringing students from different socio-economic groups together in an effort to close the achievement gap. I was thrilled to get the opportunity to teach at GEHMS six years into my career as an educator. In the past fourteen years while I have worked at GEHMS I have seen barriers between the races breakdown, lines between social status blur, and students from struggling backgrounds meet success in college and beyond. There is simply a connection that our alumni feel to the little elementary magnet school that is apparent whenever we meet up. It can be seen in the number of alumni that visit year after year, the alumni who volunteer for school events, and during chance meetings within the community.

When my husband and I started our own family, we knew we wanted our children to attend GHEMS. South Windsor is a great town, and we moved here in part because of the strong reputation of the school system. However, we knew we wanted our children to be part of the magnet school mission. As a middle school student at Timothy Edwards Middle School, my son has an appreciation of differences and a level of empathy that I know is a direct result of his formative experiences at GEHMS.

In these tight budget times, our magnet schools are at risk. Without sustainable funding, CREC which operates seventeen of these innovative schools, will be forced to either cut programming or to increase the costs they charge to local school districts.

I am asking the legislature to follow through on its promise to invest in the future of *all* students. Magnet schools have a successful track record of closing the achievement gap and providing all students a chance not only to succeed but also to thrive. [Currently the State Board is considering adding more Charter Schools. Before you add any more schools, please adequately fund those that you have established and that are thriving.] I urge you to continue funding the schools that are already operating and available and have demonstrated success before you consider funding new school choice options.

Thank you for reading my letter. Please reply and share with me how you will ensure that my child's school's funding will remain in place. I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Sincerely,

K. Michelle Garbart